



WASHINGTON COUNCIL FOR PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

Children's Trust Fund of Washington
www.wcpcan.wa.gov

WCPCAN PROTECTIVE FACTOR GOALS

WORKING OPERATIONALIZED DEFINITIONS

WCPCAN routinely reviews the literature and information on best practices in child abuse prevention. Through that process we have determined that the following areas make the most difference in determining a child's chances for growing up in a protective environment. Programs that support these protective factors have the greatest chance of preventing child abuse and supporting families. WCPCAN funded programs must focus on and demonstrate positive outcomes in at least one of the following protective factor goals.

1. Nurturing and Attachment:

Activities that teach parents and caretakers to respond appropriately to the basic needs of their babies and young children. Parents and caretakers learn ways to stimulate healthy brain development and develop a positive and secure attachment with their child. Examples include: breast feeding and proper nutrition, holding a baby, listening to and differentiating their cries and other forms of communication, play with, cuddling, and touching babies and young children, choosing appropriate toys, keeping a safe home environment, understanding sleep needs, attending to routine health needs and knowing when to seek help for serious health concerns, etc. These are activities which lay the foundation for a positive and loving relationship between the child and the parent or caretaker.

2. Responsive Social Support Network:

Activities that reduce social isolation and assure families the ability to access needed formal or informal community resources. Parents/caretakers learn about the availability of services in their community and how to access them and build effective skills to facilitate continued access. Issues of concern might include housing, medical services or childcare. Parents and caretakers may also learn skills to engage with others in a socially acceptable/positive manner and develop informal relationships with others who are caring for children. Issues of concern might include engagement, self-confidence, building a sense of community or identifying someone to trust in a time of need. Whether developing formal or informal supports, parents and caretakers learn to develop the strength of help seeking related to their own needs or those of their children.

3. Knowledge of Child Development:

Activities that teach parents and caretakers the usual steps in their child's development, how to recognize if their child needs special help; and awareness of new research in child development and how to promote healthy development. Caretakers learn about their child's developmental milestones, what gross and fine motor skill development is, what their child should be able to do at certain broad age range levels, and how to guide their child's development. Caretakers learn about their child's social, mental, emotional, and physical development. Specific topics might include, feeding, attachment and separation, toilet training, toys and play, reading, increasing responsibilities, response to transitions such as walking, and talking to name a few examples. This knowledge ensures that parents will develop realistic expectations of their children. Caretakers learn to put into perspective what their children can do at a certain age, e.g. caretakers learn that it is not reasonable for a six month old to be toilet trained, that you can't spoil babies by picking them up, that some babies are colicky and may cry incessantly, that two year olds need help getting dressed, making transitions, etc.

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4. Effective Problem-solving:

Activities that teach parents and caretakers to recognize who owns a problem and how to effectively solve it. Caretakers learn to hold family meetings, develop listening skills, brainstorm, take responsibility for behaviors and situations they want changed, and how to communicate their needs and feelings. Caretakers and parents learn to ask for help and how to appropriately help others.

5. Effective Communication:

Culturally appropriate (relevant and/or sensitive) activities that teach parents and caretakers positive communication and listening skills. Activities encourage parents and caretakers to identify and communicate their own needs and feelings, and increase their ability to listen and understand the needs of their children. When culturally appropriate, caretakers might learn to use “I” statements, active listening, observation, reflective listening, and how to take a “time out” from an out of control situation. Parents and caretakers are encouraged to learn to manage their anger and communicate this in a way others will listen and respond to appropriately. Parents and caretakers also learn how to develop these skills in their children and teach them to be effective communicators. Effective communication can be a component of effective problem-solving.

6. Stress Management:

Activities that address the physical, emotional and cognitive impacts of stress. Families learn about ways in which exposure to uncertainty, instability, and a changing environment can increase stress and become better skilled at recognizing how stress affects both children and adults. Programs will move participants toward successful coping skills utilizing a variety of strategies. Interventions should be based on an acknowledgement of socio-cultural factors, the importance of self-efficacy and belonging, and an understanding of positive and negative stress. Stress management education can include awareness raising (ways to minimize environmental and relational stressors), stress reduction strategies (physical and emotional), and techniques that build family capacity to manage stress (social networks, goal setting, healthy habits, etc.).

7. Non-punitive Discipline and Guidance:

Parents and caregivers learn developmentally-appropriate and culturally-relevant discipline and guidance methods. Parents and caregivers have the opportunity to reflect upon their own upbringing and to look at discipline situations from the child’s point of view. Non-English speaking parents may learn more about American standards of discipline and how those values are similar or different than those of their own culture. They learn what techniques work best for what age children in which stage of emotional development, and that not all techniques work with all children. Caregivers learn about the damage physical punishment can cause. A range of strategies is offered and the opportunity to practice non-punitive techniques, such as limit setting, redirection, and natural and logical consequences. They learn to use these approaches within their own cultural and family structures.

8. Effective Family Life Management & Self-sufficiency Skills:

Activities that develop skills in daily family life management and economic self-sufficiency. These skills may include: budgeting and family income management, economical and healthy meal preparation, finding adequate housing, child care, applying for financial assistance, vocational training, job interview preparation, resume development, employment seeking skill development, and vocational and career assessment. Participants may learn skills and gain resources to balance work and family needs and to develop their basic education skills, work towards high school completion, GED achievement, or English as a second language skills. Program services are designed to assist participants in developing skills that will help them effectively manage their daily lives, and increase family stability.

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